

# as palmeiras

t h e p a l m s

**As palmeiras [The palms]** (2018)

by Eric Banks

*North American premiere*



**THE ESOTERICS**  
Directed by Eric Banks

Friday | 8 April 2022 | 7 & 830pm  
Queen Anne Christian Church  
1316 3rd Avenue West | Seattle

Saturday | 9 April 2022 | 3pm  
St John's Episcopal Church  
114 20th Avenue Southeast | Olympia

# the palms

## PROGRAM

Please turn off all noise-making devices, and refrain from talking during the performance. Thank you.

As palmeiras [The palms] (2018)

Eric Banks (b 1969)

**THE ESOTERICS**

**Eric Banks**  
Founding director

Aaron Moore

Allison Fortenberry

Alexandra King

Amy Korver

Brittini Liyanage

Daniel Powers \*

Ethan Shutt

Jade Hersch

Jennifer Hrachovec \*

Jonathan You \*

Julia Jay

Leigh McGill \*

Livia Lenington \*

Logan Cox

Mitchell Baier \*

Olivia Sutherland \*

Shawna Avinger \*

Stephen Elliott

Tristain Holmes

Will Dean

\* denotes soloists

- 1 Sacramento, California, United States
- 2 Mexico City, Mexico
- 3 Quito, Ecuador
- 4 Hartford, Connecticut, United States
- 5 Amesbury, Massachusetts, United States
- 6 Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 7 Montevideo, Uruguay
- 8 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- 9 Dakar, Senegal
- 10 Porto, Portugal
- 11 Córdoba, Spain
- 12 Edinburgh, Scotland
- 13 Oxford, England
- 14 Accra, Ghana
- 15 Kent, England
- 16 Düsseldorf, Germany
- 17 Douala, Cameroon
- 18 Tunis, Tunisia
- 19 Kristiania (Oslo), Norway
- 20 Florence, Italy
- 21 Kinshasa, The Democratic Republic of the Congo
- 22 Istanbul, Turkey
- 23 Cairo, Egypt
- 24 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- 25 Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- 26 Zanzibar City, Tanzania
- 27 Stavropol, Russia
- 28 Tehran, Iran
- 29 Kabul, Afghanistan
- 30 Kolkata, India
- 31 Cau Kinh Village (near Saigon), Vietnam
- 32 Xingyang, Henan Province, China
- 33 Kalimantan, Borneo, Indonesia
- 34 Manila, The Philippines
- 35 Tokyo, Japan
- 36 Maui, Hawai'i, United States
- 37 Pape'ete, Tahiti, French Polynesia

**Special thanks to:**

Sarah Lewontin | *Supertitlist* Garrett Lenington | *Technical Producer*  
Matthew Bonner, Christine Dove, Joe Scott | *Box Office Coordinators*

# T H E E S O T E R I C S

Now on the cusp of its 30<sup>th</sup> concert season, Seattle's most innovative chorus has drawn local, national, and international praise for performing rarely-heard compositions of contemporary music for unaccompanied voices, for infusing elements of the literary, theatrical, and visual arts into the typical concert experience, and for inspiring and performing new *a cappella* choral settings of poetry, philosophy, and spiritual writings by composers around the world. In early 1992, Eric Banks brought together a group of friends to perform his Master's and Doctoral recitals in Choral Studies at the University of Washington. After Banks' recitals were completed, the group wanted to keep singing together, so Banks chose a name for his ensemble based on the Greek adjective εσωτερικος – which describes a close-knit community and the secret knowledge that its members share. Since incorporating with this name in 1993, The Esoterics has performed hundreds of concerts throughout the Pacific Northwest, has commissioned and premiered hundreds of new works for *a cappella* voices in myriad languages, and has mastered many of the most virtuosic choral works of the last century in concerts described as “compelling,” “crafted,” “luxuriant,” “lyrical,” “sumptuous,” and “superb.” The Esoterics has released twenty-one CD recordings on its own label (Terpsichore) and has been honored to compete at the 2000 Cork International Choral Festival (Ireland), the 2001 Certamen Coral de Tolosa (Spain), and the 2006 Harald Andersen International Choir Competition in Helsinki (Finland). As well, The Esoterics has demonstrated its continuing commitment to choral education in becoming the only choral ensemble in Washington State that grants continuing-education credit to its members who also teach in the public schools. In recognition for its efforts in choral education and innovation, The Esoterics has been honored five times with the ASCAP and Chorus America Award for the Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music (in 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2017). The Esoterics has been honored to receive grants from the arts commissions of Washington State, King County, and the City of Seattle, as well as funding from Amazon, Google, Microsoft, the Seattle Foundation, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the BMI Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Esoterics is a proud member chorus of ACDA (the American Choral Directors Association), Chorus America, IFCM (the International Federation for Choral Music), and GALA (the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses).

# M I S S I O N S T A T E M E N T

The Esoterics is a Seattle-based vocal ensemble that is dedicated to performing and perpetuating contemporary *a cappella* choral settings of poetry, philosophy, and spiritual writings from around the world.

While cultivating artistic expression and cultural understanding among its singers and audience alike, The Esoterics aspires to reflect the beauty, power, and significance that are inherent in the music of our time.

# E R I C B A N K S

As a conductor, composer, clinician, vocalist, linguist, and ethnomusicologist, Eric Banks has garnered significant acclaim as one of the most creative and compelling choral directors in the United States for his unwavering commitment to new music for unaccompanied voices. In 1992, Eric founded The Esoterics, a professional-caliber chamber chorus in Seattle whose mission is to perform and perpetuate contemporary choral music beyond the scope of the established *a cappella* canon. After completing his BA in Composition at Yale University in 1990, Eric relocated to Seattle to study in the departments of Choral Studies and Music Theory at the University of Washington. His MM thesis (1992) is a performance edition of *Dixit Dominus* by Chiara Margarita Cozzolani; his MA thesis (1995) is a postmodern analysis of Arvo Pärt's *Credo*; and his DMA dissertation (1996) surveys the choral music of Mexican composer and Aztec ethnomusicologist Carlos Chávez. In 1997, at the conclusion of his graduate study, Banks traveled to Sweden as a Fulbright Scholar and Lois Roth Fellow in order to learn more about its contemporary choral culture. While in Stockholm, Eric performed with several ensembles, including the Swedish Radio Choir and the Eric Ericson Chamber Choir. In his music, Eric is drawn to ideas that are ‘esoteric’ in origin, and chooses to express concepts that are undiscovered, under-represented, or not easily decipherable to a wider audience. As a composer, Banks has been able to combine his love of poetry, foreign language, classical civilization, social justice, comparative religion, and the natural sciences to create a growing repertoire of new works for *a cappella* chorus. Several of Banks' commissioned works have been recorded by The Esoterics, and can be found on CDs released on the Terpsichore label. Eric was a visiting scholar at the Royal Conservatory of Music and Swedish National Radio in Stockholm, as well as at the Cama Oriental Institute in Mumbai, India. Winner of the 2010 *Dale Warland Singers Commission Award* from Chorus America and the American Composers Forum, Eric has received composition and research grants from 4Culture, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Artist Trust, the Atwood Foundation, New Music USA, the San Francisco Arts Commission, Seattle CityArtists, the Washington State Arts Commission, and three “creativity” grants the National Endowment for the Arts. His upcoming premieres include pieces for Ember in New York City, Mikrokosmos in Paris, and the San Francisco Girls Chorus. Eric lives in Seattle with David Gellman, his husband of 25 years (who is also The Esoterics' graphic design guru). You can read more about Eric's work on his own webpage: [www.ericbanks.com](http://www.ericbanks.com). Eric is a member of ASCAP.

# The palms | Texts and translations

## 1 SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES [ 121° 28' W ]

from *On the road* (1957)  
by Jack Kerouac  
(American author, 1922-1969)

"I suddenly realized I was in California.  
Warm, palmy air – air you can kiss – and palms."

## 2 MEXICO CITY, MEXICO [ 99° 08' W ]

*Una palmera (A palm tree, 1952)*  
by Rosario Castellanos  
(Mexican poet, 1925-1974)

Señora de los vientos,  
garza de la llanura,  
cuando te meces canta  
tu cintura.

Gesto de la oración  
o preludio del vuelo,  
en tu copa se vierten uno a uno  
los cielos.

Desde el país oscuro de los hombres  
he venido, a mirarte, de rodillas.  
Alta, desnuda, única.  
Poesía.

señora de los βientos,  
garsa de la lanura,  
kwando te meses kanta  
tu sintura.

xesto de la orasion  
o preluđio del βwelo,  
'en tu kopa se βierten  
'uno a uno los s'elos.

dezðel pais oskuro  
de los ombres e βeniðo,  
'a mirarte, de rodijas  
'alta, deznuða, 'unika.  
poesia.

*Lady of the winds,  
heron of the plain,  
whenever you sway,  
your waist sings.*

*A gesture of the prayer,  
or a prelude to the flight,  
into you cup, one by one,  
the heavens are poured.*

*From the dark country of men  
I have come on my knees to see you.  
Tall, naked, unique.  
Poetry.*

## 3 QUITO, ECUADOR [ 78° 35' W ]

*Palmera (The palm, 1936)*  
by Jorge Carrera Andrade  
(Ecuadorian poet, 1903-1978)

Más que árbol, arquitectura  
a pulso de sol y viento,  
la palmera es la columna  
de ajimez del cielo.

mas ke 'arbol, 'arkitektura  
'a pulso de sol 'i βiento,  
la palmera 'es la kolumna  
de 'ahimes del s'ielo.

*More than a tree, it is architecture  
at the pulse of sun and wind,  
the palm is the column that supports  
the arched window of the sky.*

## 4 HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT, UNITED STATES [ 72° 40' W ]

*Of mere being (1954)*  
by Wallace Stevens  
(American poet, 1879-1955)

The palm at the end of the mind,  
Beyond the last thought, rises  
In the bronze décor.

A gold-feathered bird  
Sings in the palm, without human meaning,  
Without human feeling, a foreign song.

You know then that it is not the reason  
That makes us happy or unhappy.  
The bird sings. Its feathers shine.

The palm stands on the edge of space.  
The wind moves slowly in the branches.  
The bird's fire-fangled feathers dangle down.

## 5 AMESBURY, MASSACHUSETTS, UNITED STATES [ 70° 56' W ]

from *The palm-tree* (1858)  
by John Greenleaf Whittier  
(American poet, 1807-1892)

Is it the palm, the cocoa-palm,  
On the Indian Sea, by the isles of balm?  
Or is it a ship in the breezeless calm?

A ship whose keel is of palm beneath,  
Whose ribs of palm have a palm-bark sheath,  
And a rudder of palm it steereth with.

Branches of palm are its spars and rails,  
Fibres of palm are its woven sails,  
And the rope is of palm that idly trails!

## 6 BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA [ 58° 23' W ]

*La palmera (The palm, 1924)*  
by Leopoldo Lugones Argüello  
(Argentine poet, 1874-1938)

Al llegar la hora esperada  
en que de amarla me muera,  
que dejen una palmera  
sobre mi tumba plantada.

Así cuando todo calle,  
en el olvido disuelto,  
recobraré el tronco esbelto  
la elegancia de su talle.

En la copa, que su alteza  
doble con melancolía,  
se abatirá la sombría  
dulzura de su cabeza.

Entregará con ternura  
la flor, al viento sonoro,  
el mismo reguero de oro  
que dejaba su hermosura.

Como un suspiro al pasar,  
palpitando entre las hojas,  
murmurará mis congojas  
la brisa crepuscular.

Y mi recuerdo ha de ser,  
en su angustia sin reposo,  
el pájaro misterioso  
que vuelve al anochecer.

'al Jegar la ora esperada  
'en ke de amarla me mwera,  
ke dehen una palmera  
sobre mi tumba plantada.

'asi kwando todo kaJe,  
'en el olßido diswelto,  
rekobrara el tronko esbelto  
la elegans'ia de su taje.

'en la kopa, ke su altesa  
doble kon melankolia,  
se abatira la sombría  
dulsura de su kabesa.

'entregara kon ternura  
la flor, al ß'iento sonoro,  
'el mismo regero de oro  
ke dehaba su ermosura.

komo un suspiro al pasar,  
palpitando entre las ohas,  
murmurara mis kongohas  
la brisa krepuskular.

'i mi rekwerdo a de ser,  
'en su 'angust'ia sin reposo,  
'el paharo misterioso  
ke ßwelße al anotßeser.

*When the awaited hour comes  
when I leave this beloved life,  
leave a palm tree for me,  
planted on my grave.*

*Thus when all is quiet  
and dissolved into oblivion,  
her slender trunk will recover  
the elegance of her waist.*

*And in her cup, whose height  
is doubled in melancholy,  
her head will droop  
with somber sweetness.*

*She will tenderly deliver the flower  
to the sound of the wind,  
with the same golden trail  
that her own beauty left behind.*

*Like a passing sigh,  
that flutters among the fronds,  
she will murmur my heartache  
to the twilight breeze.*

*And so my memory must be,  
in its restlessness and anguish,  
like a mysterious bird  
that returns at nightfall.*

## 7 MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY [ 56° 11' W ]

*Soneto a una palma (Sonnet to a palm, 1956)*  
by Juana de Ibarbourou  
(Uruguayan poet, 1892-1979)

Ya sin hambre ni sed, apenas alma,  
Apenas cuerpo que se va durmiendo  
Toda lúcida mente es como entiendo  
La infinitud de Dios en esta palma.

Cuando todo se vuelva eterna calma  
Y siga el mar la frágil tierra hendiendo  
Poco a poco mi espíritu volviendo  
Irás a buscar morada en esta palma.

Tal vez pequeño pájaro de canto  
O humilde y tierno ramo de oxicanto  
Con una flor azul junto a su planta,

Mi palma ya será mi patria eterna  
Y ha de tener por siempre una lucerna  
La luz de una amistad que siembra y canta.

za sin 'ambre ni seð, 'apenas 'alma,  
'apenas kwerpo ke se ßa durmiendo  
toda lusida mente es komo entiendo  
la infinituð de d'ios 'en 'esta palma.

kwando todo se ßwelße eterna kalma  
'i siga el mar la frahil t'erra endi'endo  
poko a poko mi espiritu ßolß'i'endo  
'ira a buskar morada en 'esta palma.

tal βes pekenio paharo de kanto  
'o umilde i tierno ramo de oksikanto  
kon 'una flor 'asul hunto a su planta,

mi palma 3a sera mi patria eterna  
'i a de tener por siempre una luserna  
la lus de una amistað ke siembra i canta.

*At once beyond hunger or thirst,  
Scarcely a soul, barely a body, soon to sleep,  
With an entirely lucid mind: this is how I understand  
The infinity of God in this palm tree.*

*When everything becomes eternally calm,  
And follows the sea as it cleaves the fragile earth,  
Little by little, my spirit will return, it will go  
To seek shelter in this palm.*

*Perhaps there will be a little songbird,  
Or a humble, tender branch of hawthorn  
With its blue flower beside this tree,*

*For my palm will be my eternal homeland,  
And it will shine forever like a beacon  
With the light of friendship that sows and sings.*

**8**

**RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL [ 43° 12' W ]**

*A palmeira (The palm tree, 1957)*

by Cecília Meireles

(Brazilian poet, 1901-1964)

Palmeira sem história,  
anônima na mata  
unida ao verde, a tantas  
ramagens recostada  
e a seu destino presa,

Quando te olho recordo  
uma vila distante  
de amarelo crepúsculo,  
onde os pássaros vinham  
pousar na minha mesa;

Quando te amo compreendo  
que és a sombra daquela  
perdida em tarde e névoa  
e o amor que por ti sinto  
é saudade e tristeza.

palmera sē istoria,  
'anonima na mata  
'unidāu verdzi,  
'a tantas xamazens xekostada  
'i a sēu deŝtino preza,

kwando tŝioľu  
xekorduma vila distāntŝi  
dž'amarelu krepuskulu  
'ondľos pasaruz viniāu  
puzar na min'ia meza;

kwando tŝiamu  
kompriendu ki ez a sombra  
dakela pexdzida ēi tardzi 'i nevua  
'i u amor ke por tŝi sintu  
'ε saudadzı 'i tristeza.

*Palm tree with no history,  
anonymous in the forest,  
bonded to the green,  
to so many reclining branches  
and prey to its own destiny,*

*When I look at you, I remember  
a distant village  
in the yellow twilight,  
where the birds came  
to rest upon my writing table.*

*When I love you, I understand  
that you are the shade of those  
who are lost in the afternoon and the fog,  
and the love that I feel for you  
is longing and sadness.*

**9**

**DAKAR, SENEGAL [ 17° 27' W ]**

*A Wolof proverb*

Ba nga séenee ron,  
ron a la jékka séen.

ba ŋa sene ron,  
ron 'a la dž'akka sen.

*"Whenever you see the palm tree,  
it has already seen you."*

**10**

**PORTO, PORTUGAL [ 8° 37' W ]**

*As palmeiras (The palms, 1994)*

by Eugénio de Andrade (born José Fontinhas)  
(Portuguese poet, 1923-2005)

Também o deserto vem  
do mar. Não sei em que navio,  
mas foi desses lugares  
que chegaram ao meu jardim  
as palmeiras.

Com o sol das areias  
em cada folha,  
na coroa o sopro  
ainda húmido das estrelas.

tambaĩ u dizertu vāi  
du mar. naũ sãĩ 'in ki nav'iu  
mıŝ foj desıŝ lugarıŝ  
ki ŝıgaroũ ao mıu zardıĩ  
'ıŝ palma'ı'ıŝ.  
koũ u sɔl dez ara'ıŝ  
'en kadı fol'ıı  
na kuroı 'u sopru  
'a'ındı 'umıdu dez estrelıŝ.

Also the desert comes from  
the sea. Upon which ship I do not know,  
but it was from such a place  
that they arrived in my garden:  
the palm trees.

With the sun of the sands  
on every leafy frond,  
and within its crown  
the still moist breath of the stars.

## 11 CÓRDOBA, SPAIN [ 4° 44' W ]

نخلة الرصافة (The palm of Ruṣafa, 756)

by Abd ar-Rahman ibn Mu'awiya ibn Hisham  
ibn Abd al-Malik (عبد الرحمن بن معاوية بن هشام بن عبد الملك)  
(Syrian poet and soldier, Emir of Córdoba, 731-788)

تبدت لنا وسط الرصافة نخلة  
تناءت بأرض الغرب عن بلد النخل  
فقلت شبيهي في التغرب والنوى  
وطول التناهي عن بني وعن أهلي  
نشأت بأرض أنت فيها غريبة  
فممتلك في الإقصاء والمتأى مثلي  
سقتك غوادي المزن من صوبها الذي  
يسح ويستمري السماكين بالويل

tæbæddæt lænæ wɔstɔ\_rrusɔfæti næxlætun  
tænæ'æt bɪ'ɔrdɪ\_lɔrbi fæn bæləædɪ\_nnæxli.  
fɔɔultu fæbihi fɪ\_ttoɔɔrubi wæ\_nnæwæ  
wɔɔtɪlɪ\_ttænæ'i fæn bæni'æ wæfæn 'æhli.  
næfæ'ti bɪ'ɔrdɪn 'ænti fihæ ɔribætun  
fæmɪθluki fɪ\_lɪqɔsɔ'i wæ\_lmunæt'æ mɪθli.  
sɔɔtɔki ɔwædi\_ælmuzni mɪn ɔwbihæ\_læði  
jæsiɪu wæ jæstæmri\_ssæmækinæ bɪlwæbli.

The lonely palm appeared to us in the middle of Raṣafa,  
While we were in the West, far from the land of palms.  
I said to the tree: "You are in the remotest exile, like I am,  
So far from my son and my family for such a long time.  
Like me, you sprang up and grew in a foreign land,  
And like you, I have been excluded and estranged.  
May the rain from the early morning clouds nourish you,  
And may copious waters pour down and comfort you."

## 12 EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND [ 3° 11' W ]

from *The Hawaiian archipelago: Six months among the palm  
groves, coral reefs, and volcanoes of the Sandwich Islands* (1875)

by Isabella Bird  
(Scottish explorer, 1831-1904)

"As I write now,  
I hear the moaning rustle of the wind  
through their plume-like tops,  
and their long slender stems,  
and crisp crown of leaves above the trees  
with shining leafage which revel in damp...

They fringe the shores of these islands.  
Wherever it is dry and fiercely hot,  
and the lava is black and hard,  
and nothing else grows, or can grow,  
there they are, close to the sea,  
sending their root-fibres seawards  
as if in search of salt water.

Their long, curved, wrinkled, perfectly cylindrical stems,  
bulging near the ground like an apothecary's pestle,  
rise to a height of from sixty to one hundred feet.  
These stems are never straight,  
and in a grove, lean and curve every way.

They look as if they had never been young,  
and they show no signs of growth,  
rearing their plummy tufts so far aloft,  
and casting their shadows so far away,  
always supremely lonely, as though  
they belonged to the heavens, rather than the earth."

## 13 OXFORD, ENGLAND [ 1° 15' W ]

*Abruptly all the palm trees* (1950)  
by William Jay Smith  
(American poet, 1918-2015)

Abruptly all the palm trees rose like parasols,  
And sunlight danced, and green to greenness gave.  
Birds flew forth and cast like waterfalls  
Shadow upon shade.

Where the crab with its linoleum colors crawls,  
And coral combs the crystal-caverned sea,  
We stood, our blood as bright and fringed as shawls  
Before the beautiful, progressing leaf.

Abruptly all the palm trees rose like parasols,  
And green was the green which green to greenness gave.  
Dimensions crumbled, time lay down its walls,  
And all the world went wading towards the wave.

## 14 ACCRA, GHANA [ 0° 12' W ]

An Oji proverb

Biribi ñko ka empopã, enye krada.  
biribi ŋko ka 'empopa 'enje krada

"If nothing touches the palm leaves, they do not rustle."

## 15 KENT, ENGLAND [ 0° 73' E ]

from *Arcadia* (adapted, 1585)  
by Sir Philip Sidney  
(English poet, courtier, soldier, and scholar, 1554-1586)

"For it is the temper of the highest heart,  
to strive most upward when it is most burdened,  
like the palm-tree."

## 16 DÜSSELDORF, GERMANY [ 6° 47' E ]

*Der Fichtenbaum und die Palme*  
(*The pine tree and the palm*, 1827)

by Heinrich Heine

(German poet, 1797-1856)

Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam  
Im Norden auf kahler Höh';  
Ihn schläfert; mit weißer Decke  
Umhüllen ihn Eis und Schnee.

Er träumt von einer Palme,  
Die, fern im Morgenland,  
Einsam und schweigend trauert  
Auf brennender Felsenwand.

'aɪn fiçtənbaum ʃtet 'aɪnzam  
'im nordən 'auf kalɛɐ̯ høh'  
'in ʃlɛfɛɐ̯t; mit vaɪsɛɐ̯ dɛkə  
'umhʏllən 'in 'aɪs 'unt ʃne.

'ɛɐ̯ trøʏmt fon 'aɪnɛɐ̯ palmə,  
di fɛɐ̯n 'im moɐ̯gɛnlant,  
'aɪnzam 'unt ʃvaɪgɛnt trəuɛɐ̯t  
'auf bɛnɛnɛndɛɐ̯ fɛlzɛnvant.

*A single pine tree stands alone*  
*At a barren northern height;*  
*Encased in white, it slumbers*  
*Under a blanket of ice and snow.*

*It dreams of a single palm tree*  
*In a distant Eastern land,*  
*That suffers in silent sorrow*  
*Beside a wall of sweltering stones.*

## 17 DOUALA, CAMEROON [ 9° 41' E ]

*A Cameroonian proverb*

“Il n'y a pas de raccourcis vers le haut du palmier.”

'il n'ja pas də ɐ̯akurɛsi vɛɐ̯ lə 'o dy palmiɛ.

“*There are no shortcuts to the top of the palm tree.*”

## 18 TUNIS, TUNISIA [ 10° 11' E ]

*L'adoration des palmes*  
(*The adoration of the palms*, 1932)

by Jean Amrouche

(Algerian-French poet, 1906-1962)

Les palmes dans la nuit versent de lourdes larmes.  
Leurs ombres sur la mer s'inclinent,  
à peine bruissent  
comme pleurant les âmes éparées  
en l'immobilité sereine des étoiles.

Palmes,  
pour qui le frémissement de vos mains retombées  
et votre sourd sanglot dans le vertige de la nuit?

Palmes,  
pour qui l'appel des mers lointaines,  
les parfums chauds, l'angoisse,  
qui reposent dans l'or de vos coeurs entr'ouverts,  
au froid baiser de la lune?

Viendra-t-il, l'enfant nu, à l'oeil immense,  
étendre son désir le long de vos silences,  
et par le ciel sans nom  
l'amour inespéré va-t-il naître,  
puis s'élaner dans le plein des étoiles?

O palmes,  
le manteau frissonnant de vos cheveux bleuis  
et l'ombre de vos corps qui se balancent  
ont chanté tout le jour  
les soleils délirants des rives éblouies.

L'heure où le grand sommeil  
courbera nos lourdes nudités vers la terre  
a sonné, loin, dans les plaines du songe.

Nous portons sur le front le sombre diadème  
et nos coeurs alourdis par l'impossible amour  
adorent dans la nuit et la musique des étoiles  
la blessure que vos feuilles amies endorment,  
et le sanglot sans fin de vos branches tombées.

le palmə dā la nuɟi vɛɐ̯sə də luɐ̯də laɐ̯mə.  
ləɐ̯zɔ̃bɛə syɐ̯ la mɛɐ̯ sɛ̃klinə,  
'a ɐ̯ɛnə bɛɟisə  
kɔ̃m plœɐ̯ɔ̃ lezaməzɛɐ̯ɐ̯sə  
'ā limɔ̃bilite sɛɐ̯ɛnə dezɛtwalə.

palmə,  
puɐ̯ ki lə fɛɐ̯misəmā də vo mɛ̃ ɐ̯ətɔ̃bɛ  
'ɛ votɛə suɐ̯ sāglo dā lə vɛɐ̯tizə də la nuɟi.

palmə,  
puɐ̯ ki lapɛl də mɛɐ̯ lwātɛnə,  
lə ɐ̯ɐ̯fœ̃ ʃo, lāgwasə,  
ki ɐ̯ɛɐ̯ozə dā loɐ̯ də vo kœɐ̯zātɐuɐ̯vɛɐ̯.  
'o fɛɐ̯wa beze də la lynə.

v'ɛndɐvatil, lānfā ny, 'a lœɟ 'imāsə,  
'ɛtādɐwə sɔ̃ dezɪɐ̯ lə lɔ̃ də vo silāsə,  
'ɛ ɐ̯ɐ̯ lə s'ɛl sā nɔ̃  
lamuɐ̯ 'inɛspɛɐ̯ɛ vatil nɛtwə,  
ɐ̯uɟi sɛlāsɛ dā lə plɛ̃ dezɛtwalə.

'o palmə,  
lə mātɔ̃ fɛɐ̯isonā də vo ʃɛvø blœi  
'ɛ lɔ̃bɛə də vo kɔ̃ɐ̯ ki sə balāsə  
'ō ʃātɛ tu lə zuɐ̯ le solɛɟ delɪɐ̯ɔ̃ də ɐ̯ivəzɛblui.

lœɐ̯ 'u lə gɐ̯ɔ̃ sɔ̃mɛɟ  
kuɐ̯bɛɐ̯a no luɐ̯də nydite vɛɐ̯ la tɛɐ̯a sɔ̃nɛ,  
lwɛ̃, dā le plɛnə dy sɔ̃zə.

nu ɐ̯ɔ̃vɔ̃ syɐ̯ lə frɔ̃ lə sɔ̃bɛə diadɛmə  
'ɛ no kœɐ̯zaluɐ̯di ɐ̯ɐ̯ lɛ̃ɐ̯osiblɛ 'amuɐ̯  
'adɔɐ̯ɛ dā la nuɟi 'ɛ la myzɪkə dezɛtwalə  
la blɛsyɐ̯ə kə vo fœɟzami 'ādɔɐ̯mə,  
'ɛ lə sāglo sā fɛ̃ də vo bɛɐ̯ɟə tɔ̃bɛ.



*At night the palms shed heavy tears.  
Their silhouettes bend toward the sea,  
and they barely rustle,  
like scattered souls that weep  
under the serene stillness of the stars.*

*Palms,  
for whom is the tremor of your lowered hands  
and your muted sobs in the unsteady night?*

*Palms,  
for whom is the call of the distant seas,  
the warm scents, the anguish,  
that rest in the gold of your half-open hearts,  
under the cold kiss of the moon?*

*Will he come, the naked child, with the enormous eye,  
to spread his desire alongside your silences,  
and in this nameless sky  
will an unexpected love be born,  
and then rush upward into the sky full of stars?*

*O palms,  
the shivering coat of your bluish hair  
and the shadow of your swaying bodies  
have sung every day of delirious suns on dazzling shores.*

*The hour has come, when a noble sleep  
will bend our own naked heaviness toward the earth,  
and then far away, into the plains of the dream.*

*On our brows we wear this somber crown,  
and our hearts are heavy with impossible love,  
as we cherish, on this night of music from the stars,  
that our wounds are assuaged by your beloved branches,  
and by the ceaseless sobs of your fallen fronds.*

## 19 KRISTIANIA (OSLO), NORWAY [ 10° 45' E ]

from *Svanen* (*The swan*, 1851)  
by Brynjolf Bjarme (pseudonym of Henrik Ibsen)  
(Norwegian poet and playwright, 1828-1906)

Naar den taagede høst,  
Og naar vinterens snee  
Ligger fugtig og kold over nord,  
Paa den vaarlige kyst  
Under palmernes læ  
Bygger svanen sit rede og bor.

Der er friskhed og liv  
I den rige natur,  
Intet vinterskrud hyller den ind;  
Bag det bølgende siv,  
Som bag skjærmende muur,  
Er der ly for den viftende vind.

noʰr dɛn toʰkɛdɛ høst  
'o noʰr vɪntɛrɛns snɛɪ  
lɪgɛr fʊktɪ 'o kold 'ovɛr noʰrd,  
po dɛn voʰrlɪgɛ ʃyst  
'undɛr palmɛrnɛs lɛɪ  
byggɛr svanɛn sɪt rɛ'dɛ 'o boʰr.

dær 'ær frɪskhɛt 'o liv  
'i dɛn rɪkɛ natyr,  
'ɪntɛt vɪntɛrskryd hyllɛr dɛn 'ɪn  
bak dɛ bølɛndɛ sɪv,  
som bak ʃærmɛndɛ myr,  
'ær dær ly for dɛn vɪftɛndɛ vɪnd.

*While the foggy autumn  
and the snowy winter  
lay damp and cold across the north,  
on the spring-like coast  
under the shady palm  
the swan builds its nest and home.*

*There is freshness and life  
in nature's abundance,  
with no shroud of wintry attire;  
behind the billowing reeds  
like a sheltering wall, it finds  
a haven from the breezes that blow.*

## 20 FLORENCE, ITALY [ 11° 15' E ]

*Sonnet XXIX* (of *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, 1846)  
by Elizabeth Barrett Browning  
(English poet, 1806-1861)

I think of thee! – my thoughts do twine and bud  
About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,  
Put out broad leaves, and soon there's nought to see  
Except the straggling green which hides the wood.

Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood  
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee  
Who art dearer, better! Rather, instantly  
Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,

Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,  
And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee  
Drop heavily down, – burst, shattered, everywhere!

Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee  
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,  
I do not think of thee – I am too near thee.

## 21 KINSHASA, THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO [ 15° 19' E ]

*A Lingala proverb*

Nzete ya mbila bakokata ekokola, bakokata ekokola.

nzete ʃa mbila bakokata 'ekokola, bakokata 'ekokola

*"If you cut down the palm, it will grow back again."*

## 22 ISTANBUL, TURKEY [ 28° 57' E ]

*Palmiye* (*The palm tree*, 2006)  
by Süleyman Sönmez  
(Turkish poet, b 1948)

Bir zamanlar  
Bir karşı bahçede  
Yalnız bir palmiye  
Yıldızlara bakardı  
Biteviye

bir zamanlar  
bir karşı bahtşede  
yalnız bir palmiye  
ıldızlara bakardı  
biteviye

Once upon a time  
In a garden across the way  
A solitary palm tree  
Gazed at the stars  
Endlessly

## 23 CAIRO, EGYPT [ 31° 14' E ]

An Egyptian proverb

من الجيد الصدق في الحديث  
ولكن من الأفضل الحديث عن النخيل

mɪn\_ælgæjɪdɪ\_ʃsɪdɪqʊ fi\_ɬnædiθi  
wæ lækɪn mɪn\_æɫ'ɔfdɔli\_ɬnædiθi ʃænnænxili

"It is good to speak the truth,  
But it is better to speak about palm trees."

## 24 ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA [ 38° 44' E ]

An Amharic proverb

አንተ፡ ያፌዛሉ፡ የዘንባባ፡ ዛፍ፡  
ግን፡ መሰብሰብ፡ ተምረ፡ አዝመራው፡  
ከተጠናቀቀ፡ በኋላ፡ ብቻ፡ ነው።

'æntæ ʃɔfezɔlu ʃæzænbobo zɔf,  
ɡɪn mæəsæbsæb tæmɪɾ 'æzɪmæɾɔw  
kætæʃænoqæqæ bæɪwɔɔ bɪtʃɔ næw.

"You may mock the palm tree,  
but only after the date harvest is finished."

## 25 JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA [ 39° 10' E ]

A Bedouin proverb

الطول طول نخله  
والعقل عقل سخله

'ɔttʊl tʊl næxlæh,  
wæɫ ʃɔɡl ʃɔɡl sæxlæh.

"He has the height of a palm tree,  
but the mind of a baby goat."

## 26 ZANZIBAR CITY, TANZANIA [ 39° 12' E ]

A Swahili proverb

Usigombe na mkwezi,  
nazi imeliwa na mwezi.

'usigombe na mkwezi,  
nazi 'imeliwa na mwezi.

"Don't argue with the palm climber:  
the coconut has already been eaten by the moon."

## 27 STAVROPOL, RUSSIA [ 41° 59' E ]

Ha севере диком (In the northern wilderness, 1841)  
by Mikhail Lermontov  
(Russian poet, 1814-1841)

Ha севере диком стоит одиноко  
На голой вершине сосна,  
И дремлет, качаясь, и снегом сыпучим  
Одета, как ризой, она.

И снится ей всё, что в пустыне далёкой,  
В том крае, где солнца восход,  
Одна и грустна на утёсе горячем,  
Прекрасная пальма растёт.

na sʲɛvʲɪrʲɪ dʲɪkɔm stɔjɪt 'ɔdʲɪnokɔ  
na golɔj vʲɪrʲʃɪnʲɪ sasna,  
'i drʲɛmlʲɪt, katʃajəs, 'i snʲɛɡɔm sʲɪputʃɪm  
'adʲɛtɔ, kak rʲɪzɔj, 'ana.

'i snʲɪtsʲɪɔ ʲɛj fsʲɔ ʃto fpustʲɪnʲɪ dalʲokɔj  
ftom krajʲ ɡdʲɛ sontsɔ vɔsxot,  
'adna 'i ɡrusna nɔ 'utʲosʲɪ ɡarʲutʃɪm,  
prʲɪkrasnɔjə pɔlʲmɔ rɔstʲot.

In the northern wilderness, a pine tree  
Stands alone on a bare mountain top,  
While she slumbers and sways, the snow  
Drapes over her, like rhinestones.

She dreams of all in the desert faraway,  
In that place where the sun is now rising,  
While lonely and sad on a sweltering cliff,  
A beautiful palm tree grows.

## 28 TEHRAN, IRAN [ 51° 23' E ]

from *Ghazal I* (c 1850)

by عباس فروغی بسطامی, Abbas Fōrūghī Bastami  
(Iraqi-Iranian poet, 1798-1857)

نیش خاری اگر از نخل تو خواهم خوردن  
کافر، کافر، اگر نوش کنم خرما را

nɪʃɛ xɔrɪ 'æɡɛr 'æz næxlɛ to xɔhæm xordæn,  
kɔfɛræm, kɔfɛr, 'æɡɛr nuʃ konæm xormɔ rɔ.

"I am content to feel the sting  
of the thorns on your palm tree,  
And I will trust you, ungrateful one,  
if I may also taste its sweet date fruit."

## 29 KABUL, AFGHANISTAN [ 69° 08' E ]

### A Pashto proverb

ما د کجوره وني مه وښيه  
ما د کجوران وښيه

ma da kadzurah 'un'ia muhuxu'iah;  
ma da kadzuran 'uxu'iah.

*"Don't show me the palm tree; show me the dates."*

## 30 KOLKATA, INDIA [ 88° 22' E ]

### তাল গাছ ( *Tāl gāch*, *The palm tree*, 1921)

by Rabindranath Tagore

(Bengali author, poet, and translator, 1861-1941)

তাল গাছ এক পায়ে দাঁড়িয়ে  
সব গাছ ছাড়িয়ে  
উঁকি মারে আকাশে ।

মনে সাধ, কালো মেঘ ফুঁড়ে যায়,  
একেবারে উড়ে যায়  
কোথা পাবে পাখা সে ।

তাই তো সে ঠিক তার মাথাতে  
গোল গোল পাতাতে  
ইচ্ছাটি মেলে' তার

মনে মনে ভাবে, বুঝি ডানা এই,  
উড়ে যেতে মানা নেই  
বাসাখানি ফেলে তার ।

সারাদিন ঝরঝর থপথর  
কাঁপে পাতাপত্তর,  
ওড়ে যেন ভাবে ও ,

মনে মনে আকাশেতে বেড়িয়ে  
তারাদের এড়িয়ে  
যেন কোথা যাবে ও ।

তার পরে হাওয়া যেই নেমে যায়,  
পাতা কাঁপা থেমে যায়,  
ফেরে তার মনটি

যেই ভাবে, মা যে হয় মাটি তার ,  
ভালো লাগে আরবার  
পৃথিবীর কোণটি ।

tal gatʃ 'ɛk pa'ie dā'ɽi'e  
ʃob gatʃ\_tsa'ɽi'e  
'ūki mare\_akaʃe.

mōne ʃad, kalo meɣ pū're dʒaʃ,  
'ekebare 'u're dʒaʃ  
kota pabe paka ʃe.

taʃ to ʃe ʃik tara matate  
gol gol patate  
'ittʃaʃi mele tar

mōne mōne bʰabe, budʒʰi dʒana 'eʃ,  
'u're dʒete mana neʃ  
baʃakʰani pʰele tar.

ʃaradin dʒʰo'r'dʒʰo'r tʰo'ttʰo'r  
kāpe pata-po'tto'r,  
'ore dʒɛno bʰabe 'o,

mōne mōne 'akaʃete be'ɽi'e  
taradere 'e'ɽi'e  
dʒɛno ko'tʰa dʒabe 'o.

tar pare hawa dʒeʃ neme dʒaʃ  
pata kāpa tʰeme dʒaʃ,  
pʰere tar monti

dʒeʃ bʰabe, ma dʒe hoʃ maʃi tar,  
bʰalo lage 'arbar  
pʀitʰibir koŋi.

*The palm tree stands on a single stem,  
and is loftier than any other tree,  
as it peers into the vault of the sky.*

*It longs to pierce the dark ceiling  
of storm clouds and take flight -  
if only the tree had wings!*

*The palm expresses this desire  
by tossing its tresses in the wind  
and allowing its branches to swish and sway,*

*It thinks: "If my fronds were feathers,  
then nothing would keep me  
from rising off the ground."*

*For the whole day, the wind-blown palm  
rustles and trembles, quivers and shakes,  
as though it thinks it can fly -*

*It imagines soaring through the heavens,  
wandering to the outermost reaches,  
stretching up to the region of the stars.*

*But as soon as the wind begins to subside,  
the leafy palm fronds grow quiet and still,  
and the awareness of the tree returns -*

*The palm then remembers its mother,  
the earth, and appreciates once more  
its own sweet corner of the world.*

## 31 CAU KINH VILLAGE (NEAR SAIGON), VIETNAM [ 106° 42' E ]

from *Fragrant palm leaves* (adapted, 1964)

by Thích Nhất Hạnh

(Vietnamese Buddhist monk and author, b 1926)

"As I write, I am in a small building  
made of thatched coconut-palm leaves.  
It is early morning  
and I'm sitting by the window,  
looking out at the rice fields  
that are brushed by the rising sun.

To the left, a young girl  
is standing in the field.  
Straight ahead, lush coconut palms  
line the streams and marshes.  
To the right extends the village.

I returned from Saigon late yesterday  
after teaching a class.  
The breeze was so refreshing  
as I leisurely walked home.

By the time I reached the village bridge,  
the full moon was peeking out  
over the coconut trees along the river.”

## 32 XINGYANG, HENAN PROVINCE, CHINA [ 113° 21' E ]

题僧房双桐 (ti sŋŋ faŋ ʃʷaŋ toŋ,

*At the room of two monks, 750)*

by Chānglíng Wáng [王昌龄]

(Chinese poet of the Tang dynasty, 698-756)

棕榈花满院,

苔藓入闲房。

彼此名言绝,

空中闻异香。

dzoŋ ly h<sup>w</sup>a man <sup>u</sup>ɛn  
tai ɕiɛn ɕu ɕiɛn faŋ  
bi ts<sup>h</sup>i mŋŋ ʃɛn dʒ<sup>u</sup>ɛ  
koŋ dʒoŋ <sup>w</sup>ɛn ʃi ɕiaŋ

*The palm flowers blossomed in the garden,  
And the moss crept into the empty room;  
Here, their souls were struck with silence,  
As the exotic scent lingered in the air.*

## 33 KALIMANTAN, BORNEO, INDONESIA [ 114° 00' E ]

from *Indonesia is killing the planet for palm oil* (2014)

adapted from an article in *Vice News*

by Samuel Oakford

“Indonesia is being deforested  
faster than any other country in the world,  
and it has everything to do with one product: palm oil.

Though illegal, huge swaths of the Indonesian rainforest  
have been slashed and burned each year  
to clear the way for expanding palm oil plantations.

This tree-killing spree has taken  
a heavy toll on local communities,  
destroyed natural habitats for endangered species,  
and become a critical factor in climate change.

For people living in these areas,  
the loss of wildlife is a reflection of their own plight.

Collusion between corrupt government officials  
and plantation owners  
has increased illegal land seizures,  
and effectively transformed residents overnight –  
from subsistence farmers to forced and child laborers.

These fires have produced  
some of the world’s worst pollution,  
sending suffocating smog to cities  
hundreds of miles away.”

## 34 MANILA, THE PHILIPPINES [ 121° 00' E ]

from *The scent of dried anahaw leaves* (2017)

by Patrick De Guia Lim

(Filipino poet and choral singer, b 1984)

Ang matamis na halimuyak na dumadaloy  
mula sa mga tuyong dahon ng anahaw  
na nagsisilbing bubong sa mga munting barong-barong  
ay nagpapaalala sa kagandahan ng pagtandang  
mas humahalimuyak nang matamis  
sa paglipas ng panahon.

Ang samyo ng bango ay unti-unting dumarating  
at ako ay ibinabalik ng aking mga alaala  
noong panahong una nang ako ay munting musmos pa.

Dapat ko bang ipagpatuloy ang tulong ito?  
Ang kampana ay tumutunog na ...

Ang halimuyak ng mga tuyong dahon ng anahaw  
ay saki'y nagpapahiwatig  
na mas lumawak na ang aking kaalaman  
ngayong ako'y tumanda na.

'aŋ matamis na halimuʔak na dumadaluʔ  
mula sa mŋŋa tuʔoŋ dahon nŋ 'anahau  
na nagsisilbiŋ buboŋ sa mŋŋa muntiŋ baroŋ-baroŋ  
'aʔ nagpapa'alala sa kagandahan nŋ pagtandaŋ  
mas humahalimuʔak naŋ matamis  
sa paglipas nŋ panahon.

'aŋ samʔo nŋ bango 'aʔ unti-untiŋ dumaratiŋ  
'at 'ako 'aʔ 'ibinabalik nŋ 'akiŋ mŋŋa 'ala'ala  
noʔoŋ panahoŋ 'una naŋ 'ako 'aʔ muntiŋ musmus pa.

dapat ko baŋ 'ipagpatuluʔ 'aŋ tulaŋ 'ito?  
'aŋ kampana 'aʔ tumutunug na...

'aŋ halimuʔak nŋ mŋŋa tuʔoŋ dahon nŋ 'anahau  
'aʔ saki nagpapahiwatig  
na nas lumawak na 'aŋ 'akiŋ ka'alaman  
ŋaʔoŋ 'akoʔ tumanda na

*The sweet scent that flows  
from the leaves of the dried anahaw  
that serves as the roof of small huts  
reveals the preciousness of age  
when it grows older and brittle.*

*As it comes drifting to my nose,  
I am thrown back to years ago  
when I was but a little child.*

*Should I continue this poem?*

*The bells are ringing anyway...*

*The scent of dried anahaw leaves  
gives me the feeling of knowing more  
now that I am older.*

## 35 TOKYO, JAPAN [139° 21' E]

from 椰子の実 (*Yashi no mi, The coconut*, 1901)

by Shimazaki Tōson (島崎藤村)

(Japanese poet, 1872-1943)

名も知らぬ遠き島より  
流れ寄る椰子の実ひとつ  
故郷の岸を離れて  
汝はそも波に幾月  
旧の樹は生ひや茂れる  
枝はなお影をやなせる  
われもまた渚を枕  
ひとり身の浮寝の旅ぞ

na mo jiranu toki jima jori,  
nagare jorw jaji no mi hitotsu,  
furusato no kiji wo hanarete.  
nare wa somo nami ni 'ikutsuki?  
moto no ki wa 'oi ja jigereru,  
'eda wa nao kage wo ja naseru.  
waremo mata nagisa wo makura,  
hitori mi no 'ukine no tabi dzo.

*From an unknown island far away,  
A solitary coconut drifts to the shore,  
Far from the shores of its home.  
For how long have you been wandering?  
Your mother tree still rustles in the breeze,  
And offers her strong branches for shade.  
I am also in exile; the beach is my bed too,  
On this lonely journey upon the waves.*

## 36 MAUI, HAWAII, UNITED STATES [156° 20' W]

*The palms* (1994)

by WS (William Stanley) Merwin

(American poet and environmentalist, b 1927)

Each is alone in the world  
and on some the flowers are of one sex only  
they stand as though they had no secrets  
and one by one  
the flowers emerge  
from the sheaths into the air  
where the other flowers are  
it happens in silence  
except for the wind  
often it happens in the dark  
with the earth carrying the sound of water  
most of the flowers themselves  
are small and green by day

and only a few are fragrant  
but in time the fruits are beautiful  
and later still their children  
whether they are seen or not

many of the fruits are no larger than peas  
but some are like brains of black marble  
and some have more than one seed inside them

some are full of milk  
of one taste or another  
and on a number of them  
there is a writing from long before speech  
and the children resemble each other  
with the same family preference  
for shade when young  
in which their colors deepen  
and the same family liking  
for water and warmth  
and each family deals with the wind  
in its own way  
and with the sun  
and the water

some of the leaves are crystals  
others are stars  
some are bows  
some are bridges  
and some are hands  
in a world without hands

they know of each other first from themselves  
some are fond of limestone  
and a few cling to high cliffs  
they learn from the splashing water  
and the falling water  
and the wind

much later  
the elephant will learn from them  
the muscles will learn from their shadows  
ears will begin to hear in them  
the sound of water  
and heads will float like black nutshells  
on an unmeasured ocean  
neither rising nor falling  
to be held up at last  
and named for the sea

## 37 PAPE'ETE, TAHITI, FRENCH POLYNESIA [149° 34' W]

*A Tahitian proverb*

Tupu a'au, māti'a niu, 'āre'a reva ta'ata.  
tupu 'a'au, mōti'a niu, 'ōre'a reva ta'ata.

*"The coral waxes,  
the palm tree grows,  
but man departs."*

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